

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Cockpit Point Confederate Battery  
other names/site number: DHL No. 76-302

2. Location

street & number: 17998 Cockpit Point Road  
city, town: Dumfries  
state: Virginia code: VA county: Prince William code: 152  
zip code: 22026  
 not for publication  
 vicinity

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> Total
			<u>0</u>

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Civil War Properties, Prince William County, VA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official  
*A. Bryan Mitchell*  
Director, Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks

June 16, 1989  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions):

Defense: fortification

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions):

Landscape: forest

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**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions):

Other: earthworks

Material (enter categories from instructions):

foundation:

walls: earth

roof:

other:

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Describe present and historic physical appearance. See continuation sheet

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**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

 nationally  statewide  locallyApplicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Military

Period of Significance:

1861-1865

Significant Dates:

1861-1862

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. See continuation sheet

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A  
 preliminary determination of individual listing  
(36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National  
Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings  
Survey #  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering  
Record #

Primary location of additional data:  
 State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Specify repository: DHL  
221 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of property: 16.2

UTM References:

A /18/ /3.02.560/ /42.69.980/  
Zone Easting Northing  
C /18/ /3.02.690/ /42.69.600/  
Zone Easting Northing

B /18/ /3.03.010/ /42.69.880/  
Zone Easting Northing  
D / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

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Verbal Boundary Description:

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

This parcel encompasses all of the Cockpit Point gun emplacements and what remains of the associated Civil War camp area. Evidence of Civil War activity was not noted outside this parcel.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: Jan Townsend, County Archaeologist  
organization: Prince William County, Planning Office  
street & number: 1 County Complex Court  
city or town: Prince William

date: May 1989  
telephone: (703) 335-6830  
state: VA zip code: 22192

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Property Type: Potomac River Blockade

Summary Description

Cockpit Point Confederate Battery was one of the "strong" Potomac River blockade batteries. It is located atop a 70-foot cliff overlooking the Potomac River and consists of four individual batteries. What remains are massive earthworks ranging in size from 92 feet by 50 feet to 48 feet by 32 feet. The distance from the northern to the southern extent of the earthworks is about 1,000 feet. The camp of the artillerymen is directly behind the batteries. Cockpit Point Battery is in a high, canopy hardwood forest. There is very little underbrush, but leaves cover the ground to a depth of up to one foot. The site is only accessible by foot, and is almost untouched by relic hunters. The battery area does not appear to have been occupied or even logged since the Civil War. The views from the site are superb. The overall feeling at the battery site is one of remoteness and quiet. The integrity of the Cockpit Point Battery is excellent.

Description

Cockpit Point was the name of the location during the Civil War. On present-day maps, what was Cockpit Point is now labeled Possum Nose and Cockpit Point applies only to the spit of sand to the north of Possum Nose that extends out into the Potomac. For the purposes of this document, Cockpit Point will be used in its historical sense; that is, the name will apply to what is now Possum Nose and the adjoining spit of land along the river.

The Cockpit Point Battery consists of four large batteries. A deep zigzag trench connects the two most southerly batteries and ends at the edge of the cliff about 160 feet south of the earthworks. (This is probably where the steps reported to have been cut into the cliff were located.) A trail, bricks, and a shallow depression west of where the zigzag trench meets the cliff indicate that buildings were present. (Refer to Figure 1)

The most southerly battery (Battery A) is the smallest and the least complex in design. It measures about 48 feet in a north-south direction and, at its widest point, about 32 feet in an east-

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west direction. The battery has somewhat of a figure eight configuration. (Refer to Figure 2)

Battery B is 125 feet north of Battery A. It is massive and much more complex in design. Its north-south dimension is 92 feet; its east-west measurement is approximately 50 feet. The range from high point to low point is 6 to 7 feet. (Refer to Figure 3)

Unlike the other batteries, Battery C is longer in an east-west direction than in a north-south direction. From the front to the back it is about 75 feet in length and is approximately 55 feet from side to side. As with the other batteries, Battery C takes its form from a patterning of a series of earthen mounds and depressions. (Refer to Figure 4)

Battery D, which is the most northerly of the four batteries, is similar to Battery B, only on a much smaller scale. It is about 60 feet in a north-south direction and 45 feet in an east-west direction. The earthen mounds are not as high or wide. (Refer to Figure 5)

The Cockpit Point Battery was built in the fall of 1861. It was probably constructed under the direction of General Isaac R. Trimble, the military engineer who General Joseph Johnston selected to construct the Evansport Battery. Its construction, and certainly its design, must have been coordinated with Commander Frederick Chatard, C. S. Navy, who had overall command of the Confederate batteries, and General W. H. C. Whiting, who was responsible for the defense of the Occoquan-Potomac front. Both Chatard and Whiting were accomplished engineers. Documents indicate that Trimble was concerned that Cockpit Point be built as a strong battery (Wills 1975:82), and it was.

Cockpit Point is a perfect location for a battery. The Union mayor of Alexandria, upon learning of the battery, informed Gideon Welles, the U.S. Secretary of the Navy, that:

Cockpit Point where the Confederates have a battery is in some respects a remarkable military position. It commands Freestone Point on the north, Shipping Point on the south, being a distant from either about 2 1/2 miles. The land is higher than either of them and it projects farther into the

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Potomac. In the rear it is defended by Powell's Creek, the low grounds of which are commanded by it.

Opposite in Maryland are Stump Neck and Budd's Ferry. The height of the land at Cockpit above the river is forty to fifty feet [actually it is about 60 feet above the river] . . . . The river here is being 1 1/4 miles wide. (Quote in Wells 1975:82)

No Confederate description of the batteries at Cockpit Point has been found, but there is sufficient information to construct a general picture. Of the two Union descriptions of Cockpit Point when it was first occupied, one says there were five guns (Donald 1975:46) and the other says four guns (Moore 1977:55). Their placement in the fortifications and calibers cannot be determined. It is known, however, that the Confederate battery had an 80-pounder and a 12-pounder, both of which were rifled. The 80-pounder came from the Tredegar Works in Richmond (Wills 1975:114-115) and was most likely in Battery B or C. Hanson (1961:77) also reports that there was an English 95-pounder "Homan's" rifle present with its carriage when the Union forces occupied the site. This gun and the others were removed to the Washington Navy yard.

According to Wills (1975:110), some of the guns installed at Evansport were moved to Cockpit Point once it was constructed. Apparently Brigadier General Samuel G. French, who replaced Trimble in November, wanted to transfer all of the Evansport guns to Cockpit Point because he felt that the Evansport Battery would not be able to withstand a coordinated Union land and sea attack. Not all the guns, however, were moved to Cockpit Point.

The correspondent for the New York Herald who accompanied the occupying Union troops described the Cockpit Point fortifications as "gems of engineering skill" and comments that "great credit would be due to the genius who planned and superintended their construction" if they had not been designed to uphold a "rebellion against a beneficent government." According to him they were "ingeniously contrived" (Moore 1977:55).

On entering one of them you descend an inclined plane, and after advancing about four feet you find yourself in a passage barely wide enough to admit a man. You turn within to the right or the left, still going underground, to the distance of

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from fifteen to twenty feet, when you come to the magazine itself, which is filled with shelves of cedar plank, on which shot and shell and other ammunition are stowed. The passageway is lined with cedar planks, to prevent the earth from caving in.

These cedar-lined magazines probably correspond to the smaller depressed areas located on either side of the central areas of Batteries B and D. The location of the magazine for Batteries A is likely the smaller depressed circular area away from the cliff edge. The location of the magazine for Battery C is uncertain--perhaps it was in what is now the large center depression farthest from the cliff edge.

The Herald correspondent also described what he called "rat holes." Apparently these were bombproof and located behind the guns where the Confederate soldiers could take cover from enemy fire. These "rat holes" were also cedar lined. Still farther back, the correspondent identified a number of rifle-pits at divergent angles. He was likely referring to the zig-zag trench described above.

To the rear of the fortifications was a camp (Donald 1975:46-47; Moore 1977:55), at least part of which had been constructed in December 1861. Apparently, on December 16 a local landowner returned to his farm near Cockpit Point to find only the chimneys of his buildings standing. He traced the wood to Cockpit Point, where he discovered Captain Bushrod W. Frobel erecting winter quarters (Wills 1975:84). According to Private Alfred Bellard, the camp at Cockpit Point had no pattern to it. "The quarters seemed to be built in any place that the occupants fancied" (Donald 1975:47). He also described the houses as being built very comfortable, with bunks put up and well-filled with straw.

By all accounts Cockpit Point was hastily deserted (Donald 1975:46-47; Moore 1977:55). Quarters of beef hung in trees and half-baked bread was found in the hut ovens. Plates, utensils, tools, ammunition, and clothes were left.

One-half to one mile behind the camp was a mounted steel gun (Donald 1975:47; Moore 1977:55), presumably placed to cover any forced retreats. Evidence of this gun was not located during the current recording of the area. Wills (1975:164) reports that there

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was also a powder magazine located near the present-day railroad. There are several locations that fit this description. Archaeological investigations will probably be necessary to determine the specific location of this powder magazine. Wills also noted that a field battery was located on the spit of land below the fortifications, but it was destroyed by the District of Columbia government as part of its sanitary landfill project. A camp was also destroyed by construction of the asphalt plant on the other side of the railroad.

Bricks, very shallow trenches, and low earthen mounds are scattered throughout the area between the fortifications and the railroad tracks. They probably mark the location of huts and other camp buildings. Because their outlines are vague and the leaf cover is so deep, however, exact dimensions and functions, will have to be determined through an archaeological study. Archaeological investigations could also determine: 1) what techniques were used in constructing each of the earthworks (e.g., how gabions were used, if at all), and 2) what each battery looked like in 1862 and how it functioned.

The integrity of the Cockpit Point Battery is high. According to Wills (1975:163-164), this is the best preserved site associated with the Potomac Blockade. According to Joseph Mills Hanson (1961:49), the line of Potomac River batteries "designed and constructed by such masters of military engineering as Whiting, Williamson, and Chatard was probably the most formidable in extent and strength ever built in the Confederacy." Only two batteries of this six-mile fortification system remain today in Prince William County--Cockpit Point and Freestone. The Evansport and Shipping Point batteries are gone. The Cockpit Point Battery is the only remaining "strong" battery, and the earthworks are in excellent condition. With an archaeological investigation and research into engineering and construction techniques in the early 1860s, it would be possible to obtain sufficient data to reconstruct the batteries as they were in early 1862.

The area is forested with tall, canopy hardwoods and there is very little underbrush. The leaf cover, however, can be more than twelve inches deep. There are huge ant colonies in and near the batteries. The views from the site are extraordinary, especially looking due east across the river to Maryland. From this perspective, one looks through the tops of 80-foot trees that are

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rooted near the base of the cliff. The only access to the property is by foot. The site does not appear to have been occupied or used since the Civil War. There is no evidence of logging, and there is scant evidence of relic hunting on the property. Except for the occasional sounds from passing trains, the asphalt plant, and boats on the river, nothing of the modern world intrudes on the site's setting.

The most immediate threat to the site is development. The parcel is zoned Heavy Industrial, which is probably impractical given the inaccessibility of the site. This zoning classification is under review.

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Summary Significance Statement

For five months, from October 1861 to March 1862, the Confederate blockade of the Potomac River succeeded in diverting almost all shipping away from the Potomac River, the Union's main supply route. In addition to interrupting the flow of supplies, particularly those destined for the military, the blockade was highly embarrassing for Union politicians and military leaders. Finally, out of frustration, on March 8, 1862, President Lincoln ordered the Union army and navy to cooperate in an immediate effort to capture the Potomac River batteries. Before his order could be carried out, however, the Confederate army withdrew on March 9, 1862, to more defensible positions near Richmond. The Cockpit Point Battery is the only remaining "strong" battery--Shipping Point and Evansport have both been destroyed. Of the primary blockade batteries, only Cockpit Point and Freestone still exist.

Historical Background

Captain Bushrod W. Frobel, an artillery officer, commanded the Cockpit Point Battery. The 5th Alabama Battalion and one company of the 1st Tennessee Regiment manned it. (Wills 1975:77,84) At 5:30 on October 18, 1861, Acting Master Foster of the steamer E. B. Hale reported seeing guns on Cockpit Point (Wills 1975:82). This was the first proof of the battery's existence.

By mid-October 1861 (only several months after the Battle of First Manassas), the principal Potomac Blockade batteries were in place. They included Evansport, Shipping Point, Cockpit Point, and, for a time, Freestone Point. The batteries extended for a length of six miles, and even the fastest ship attempting to run this gauntlet would have been under fire for at least an hour. Wills (1975:110) estimates that there were 37 heavy guns and an unknown number of lighter guns along the Virginia shore.

Battery construction had been anticipated by the Union. The U.S. Navy had even tried to gain support for the destruction of the batteries as they were being constructed. General McClellan, however, could not be persuaded to commit land troops to such an attack. In fact, in October, at the urging of President Lincoln and the Secretary of the Navy, General McClellan agreed to send 4,000 men to participate in a naval expedition to take possession

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of the Virginia shore above Mathias Point, which is located in King George County and about 18 miles south of Aquia Creek. In spite of the agreement, at the very last minute General McClellan simply decided not to send the men. (Wills 1975:73) By the end of October such an attack was out of the question.

According to Wills (1975:89),

that such a serious danger had been foreseen, yet allowed, struck everyone with amazement. People found it difficult to understand how Washington could become the only besieged Northern city when an army of two hundred thousand men, armed, equipped and in an apparent state of readiness were encamped in the city awaiting orders and a Flotilla of the U.S. Navy was on the Potomac River.

The New York Tribune described the situation as follows:

[It is] one of the most humiliating of all the national disgraces to which we have been compelled to submit. It has been most damaging to us in the eyes of the world. . . . And it has been their haughty boast that they had maintained steady and effectual sway over the great channel of commerce through which immense supplies of our grand army of the Potomac would naturally have passed. Our own government has been subjected to very great expense and great inconvenience, in consequence of this blockade. The inhabitants of Washington have at times suffered from scarcity of both food and fuel from the same cause. (Quoted in Wills 1972:100)

In the fall of 1861 the Baltimore and Ohio single-track railroad became Washington's only connection with the rest of the Union and remained so until March 1862. According to Wills (1975:101) "the only factor that prevented the blockade from being catastrophic was the railroad."

In response to the batteries and the threat of an Confederate invasion of southern Maryland, General Joseph Hooker's Division with eight thousand men and three field batteries of eighteen guns was sent into Charles County, Maryland. They camped along the Maryland shore opposite Cockpit Point and Shipping Point.

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William Fulton II (1986:28-29) of the 5th Alabama Battalion describes the Cockpit Point battery and gunner duty in the following manner:

We were ordered away from Manassas and went direct to "Cock Pit Point" on the Potomac River and were put in charge of some artillery planted behind some rude earth embankments on a very high point overlooking the Potomac. Here we were expected, with this artillery, to blockade the river, allowing no craft to move up or down the channel. . . . On dark nights vessels would occasionally attempt to steal by, by hugging the Maryland shore, with all lights out and making as little noise as possible. The noise of the machinery would attract the attention of our sentry and he would give the alarm and we would speedily open fire. It was all guesswork in the dark, shooting at a noise. . . . Our position here had one advantage: when we began to fire we gave the alarm to Evansport just below us and they could be ready to give them a warm reception, which they always did.

According to Fulton, at night, guards were also placed out on the sandbar located below the battery along the Potomac River. Their purpose was to warn of an enemy invasion. Fulton (1986:30) describes this picket duty as

something never to be forgotten. The wind along and across the river had full sweep, as cold as the north pole, and it set in every night about time for the tide to rise. . . . It was our custom for the messmate who went on guard to put on all the spare clothes in the mess [four to six men were in a mess], sometimes two or three shirts, as many drawers, coats and trousers, and this was the only way we kept from freezing. If the "Yanks" had landed, we, with all those clothes on, would have made an awkward effort in giving the alarm.

Although Cockpit Point gunners routinely fired upon ships attempting to run the blockade, only a few of the more dramatic exchanges are documented. The first, which is described by Wills (1975:105-106), occurred on November 14, 1861, about 8:00 A.M. A schooner with a cargo of wood suddenly slowed as the wind died. The Cockpit gunners began firing and had three minor hits. The ship's crew panicked. They anchored, jumped into the water, and swam to the Maryland shore. The Confederates launched a small boat

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with about a dozen men in it and headed for the abandoned schooner. They boarded it and set it on fire. As they were rowing back to the Virginia shore, a group of men from the 1st Massachusetts Infantry rowed to the burning boat. Their fellow soldiers cheered them on as they boarded the schooner, threw off the cargo of wood, pulled open the hatches, and extinguished the fire. While this was going on the Cockpit Point gunners began firing at and around the schooner. In response to this, the 5th U.S. Artillery set up two 10-pounder Parrotts and began shelling the Virginia shore. While this artillery exchange was taking place, the Massachusetts infantry men managed to tow the schooner to a safe area in Mattawoman Creek.

At the sound of intense artillery fire, troops of the 1st and 4th Texas regiments began the three-to-four mile march from their camps near the Telegraph Road to Cockpit Point where they believed the Union troops must be attempting to land. They arrived in time to be shelled by a Union gunboat that had moved close to shore. The Texans had to retreat and ended up spending the night in a hollow behind Cockpit Point without food or blankets.

The only casualties of this "intense" fighting was one pig killed and one mule wounded on the Northern side. The Confederates reported no physical injury.

The second incident occurred on January 2 or 3, 1862. It is described by both Wills (1975:114-115) and Hanson (1961:63-64), both of whom based their descriptions on the January 4 New York Herald account of the event. The Herald had placed a correspondent aboard the steamer Stepping Stones, which was part of the Potomac Flotilla. Lieutenant Commander Wyman, commanding the Potomac Flotilla, apparently decided that the guns at Cockpit Point could only be maneuvered to fire down or directly across the river.

To test this theory, Wyman ordered Anacostia, under Lieutenant Commander Oscar C. Badger's command, and Yankee, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Thomas H. Eastman, to position themselves so that they could fire upon the battery and enemy fire, theoretically, could not be returned. Anacostia, located out of range near Mattawoman Creek, opened fire with her 9-inch Dahlgren gun. Yankee positioned herself to the north of the battery near the mouth of Powells Creek and began bombarding Cockpit Point Battery with shells from her 64-pounder, 32-pounder, 24-pounder,

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and 12-pounder guns. Captain Frobels, who was commanding the battery, brought two of his guns, the 80-pounder and a 12-pounder, around to shell Yankee. The second 80-pounder shell struck Yankee, going through her port bow and lodging in a berth on the starboard side of the forecastle. Ordinary seaman Mitchell was wounded. Although the ship was damaged, she kept firing. Just after the fourth 80-pounder shell was fired from the Cockpit gun, a shell from each of the Union ships simultaneously hit the 80-pounder, dismounting it and forcing its abandonment. The Cockpit gunners stopped firing and the Union ships retired.

According to Wills (1975:115), had it not been for the 12-pounder, the Cockpit Point Battery would have been silenced completely. Wyman had probably been correct in his assessment of the Cockpit Point Battery firing range. Unfortunately for the Union forces, the 12-pounder from the Tredegar Works in Richmond had been installed recently to counter just such an attack.

Lieutenant Commander Wyman later reported that the large gun was remounted and moved to a more northerly position (perhaps Battery C) and a breastwork for another battery (probably Battery D) was built to protect the fortification's northern exposure. According to Hanson (1961:64), Wyman also noted at this time that there were four or five guns at Cockpit Point. There is no Confederate documentation of this exchange between Cockpit Point and the two Union ships.

In January 1862 Pensacola was ordered to leave Alexandria and join Flag Officer David Farragut who was developing the plans to capture New Orleans. Pensacola was one of the U.S. Navy's largest and most heavily armed ships. Her draft, however, was so deep that piloting her down the Potomac was difficult under the best of circumstances. Now she had to run the blockade. She reached the fortified portion of the Potomac about 4:30 A.M. on January 12th. According to Wills' account (1975:114), when Pensacola reached the blockaded area, she signaled the waiting ship Yankee, whose crew then hung a glowing lantern from its mast. Confederate spies, thinking the lantern belonged to Pensacola, which was known to be coming down the Potomac that night, signaled the ship's approach. While the Cockpit Point gunners waited for the glowing light to come into range, Pensacola quietly slipped past. Realizing their mistake, the gunners fired three shots which did serve to notify Shipping Point of the ship's approach. Seventeen shots were fired from

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Shipping Point and Evansport, but all missed Pensacola. Three months later, Pensacola, as the second ship in Farragut's armada, suffered the heaviest loss of any vessel in the fleet attacking New Orleans--37 men were killed or wounded (Hanson 1961:66-67).

In his account, William Fulton II (1986:30-31), of the 5th Alabama Battalion, describes an exchange of fire:

One day the Yankees on the Maryland side brought out some rifle cannon and getting an elevated point in the hills began to fire at our battery. About the third shot they struck the truck of one of our guns and came near dismounting it. They were shooting at long range, some four or five miles, or perhaps more, and every shot was exactly in range but a little too high, and they would pass on nearly a half mile to the rear, slashing through the trees as they went. . . . I am sure they never knew the accuracy of their aim or they would have kept it up. They were too far for our guns to reply.

This exchange is probably the same one described by Private Ballard, of the 5th New Jersey Volunteers, camped on the Maryland shore. The incident most likely occurred in February. According to Ballard (Donald 1975:43):

at some distance from our camp, an earthwork had been thrown up having for an armament two whitworth guns, and wishing to test their range, Genl. Hooker and staff had the gunners fire at the Rebels at Cockpit batterys [sic] oppisite [sic] comming [sic] very near cutting down the flag staff, from which the rebel flag floated in the breeze. The fire was returned but did not come anywhere near.

Although Union ships continued to avoid the Potomac River, the escape of Pensacola and others was cause for concern. On February 23, General Johnston wrote from his headquarters in Centreville "I believe that the guns on the Potomac have very little effect. Vessels pass the batteries at night without much damage."

In terms of artillery engagements, Johnston's conclusions were correct. Although over 5,000 shots were fired by the Confederate Potomac River batteries, few actually found their mark. This was largely due to the inexperience of the battery gunners; they were not trained artillerymen. In fact, newspapers carried ads asking

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for able-bodied men to man the "Naval Batteries Potomac Defenses" (Donnelly 1983:131-132). The naval officers were not very successful, however, and there were complaints that the army was being forced to man the Potomac batteries with companies of volunteers. A statement by a young man of the 1st Arkansas Regiment, which had duty at the Evansport battery, highlights the problem "there was no lack of volunteers. What better sport than this for bored foot-soldiers--heavy gun practice on hostile ships." (Quoted in Wills 1975:112) In effect, Washington, D.C., submitted to the blockade because of the potential, rather than the actual destruction caused by the Potomac River batteries.

In the winter 1862 General McClellan continued to resist pressure from the President and others to proceed with an invasion of Virginia and to take the blockade of the Potomac River seriously. If nothing else, the blockade was politically embarrassing. Under intense pressure for some sort of invasion of the Confederacy, McClellan began to develop the option of attacking Richmond from the east rather than by the Manassas Junction route. His plan, however, still did not address the blockade situation. Out of frustration, President Lincoln issued the following:

Executive Mansion  
Washington  
March 8, 1862

President's General War Order No. 3

Ordered, That no change in the base of operations of the Army of the Potomac shall be made without having in and about Washington such a force as, in the opinion of the General-in-Chief and commanders of the army corps, shall leave said city entirely secure.

That no more than two army corps (about 50,000 troops) of said Army of the Potomac shall be moved en route for a new base of operations until the navigation of the Potomac from Washington to the Chesapeake Bay shall be freed from the enemy's batteries and other obstructions or until the President shall hereafter give express permission.

That any movement as aforesaid en route for a new base of operations, which may be ordered by the General-in-Chief, and

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which may be intended to move upon the Chesapeake Bay, shall begin to move upon the bay as early as the 18th of March instant.

Ordered, That the Army and the Navy cooperate in an immediate effort to capture the enemy's batteries upon the Potomac between Washington and the Chesapeake Bay.

Abraham Lincoln

On March 9, 1862 (the day the Monitor and the Virginia [also known as the Merrimac] made history), unusual fires and explosions at Cockpit Point and Shipping Point were noted. Anacostia and Yankee began to shell the batteries; receiving no response they dispatched landing parties. Cockpit Point was found to be deserted and the U.S. flag was raised above it. (Wills 1975:148, 149) While Cockpit Point was being investigated the Confederate batteries to the south were burning along with City of Richmond (also called George Page), anchored in Quantico Creek.

Movement of the Confederate Army south to a more secure defensive position behind the Rappahannock River had been planned for several weeks. The Confederate leaders, however, had a major problem in terms of the roads. They had been made virtually impassable by the rains, and there was no way that most of the equipment, including much of the artillery, could be transported to the south. In addition, the troops were loaded down with personal possessions that they had brought with them at the beginning of the war. There was also an insufficient number of wagons and horses to move all the personal items. In order for the withdrawal to occur, the Confederate troops would have to leave behind much of their supplies. President Jefferson Davis concurred, and the withdrawal began when the roads became barely passable.

The key to a successful operation was absolute secrecy. On March 8, 1862, the troops at Cockpit Point stopped what they were doing and marched east to the Telegraph Road crossing of Neabsco Creek. There they joined other units from the Manassas and Occoquan areas for the slow, muddy march to south of the Rappahannock.

In the late afternoon of March 9, a landing party under the direction of Acting Master John Williams of Anacostia scaled the cliff up to the battery and inspected Cockpit Point. They found

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that the battery guns had been spiked and set on fire and bundles of wood were burning underneath them, making the guns red hot.

The following morning General Hooker detailed 500 soldiers of the 6th New Jersey to dismantle the battery sites (Hanson 1961:76). Given Private Bellard's detailed account, the 5th New Jersey Volunteers must have also been detailed to Cockpit Point (Donald 1975:44-47). Upon arriving at the batteries, the Union soldiers and sailors quickly learned that traps had been left for them. The magazines were rigged to explode when the doors to them were opened. Acting Master Williams of Anacostia cut the strings leading to the doors, and the potential bombs were defused.

Private Bellard described the camp as follows:

The camp had every appearance of being deserted in a hurry. In strolling around . . . I found in some shantys bread in the ovens half baked, in others dough in the pans all ready to bake. Tin cups half full of soup. Tin plates. Knives. Forks. Spoons etc. The bread was very heavy and looked as if they had been trying to make short cake and had no success. Quarters of beef were hanging on trees and in fact everything had a air of skedadling [sic]. Cartridges by the tub full. For coffee burnt rice seemed to be the staple, some of which we found ready ground in a coffee mill. Shoes seemed to be plenty, as they were strewn all round. Clothing was also plenty but did not look very military. Grey coats, caps and pants, some black striped and in fact all kinds that are used by farmers.

The Union troops set to work dismantling the batteries. The guns were rolled to the edge of the cliff where they were sent over. Private Bellard noted that one of the guns had "Captured from the Yankees at Bull Run" engraved on it. According to Hanson (1961:77), one gun was a valuable undamaged English 95-pounder "Homan's" rifle. Presumably the 95-pounder, 80-pounder, and 12-pounder guns were removed at this time. The guns were taken from below the cliff and loaded onto the ships. Eventually, they were shipped to the Washington Navy Yard. The rifle-pits were leveled and the gun carriages and barracks burnt. Private Bellard wrote that about "800 shot and shell, a large lot of picks, shovels, spades, axes, camp kettles, trunks," and other items were also loaded on the ship. (Donald 1975:46)

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That afternoon the 5th New Jersey Volunteers left Cockpit Point to return to Maryland. Private Bellard described the troops of the 5th as

presenting a very grotesque appearance as they were on the march [to their camp] on account of the variety of plunder that they carried home with them. Our tent boys carried off an iron tea kettle, 2 axes and 2 spades, while others were saddled with bunches of tin ware on their backs. Picks, shovels [sic], trunks and frying pans were suspended from guns, while some were puffing and blowing under the weight of shells and solid shot, that they were carrying off as mementoes of our first attack upon a rebel battery.

Interestingly, Cockpit Point battery was the cleanest of all the batteries. Captain Frobel, the commanding officer, apparently came closest to salvaging what he could without alerting the Union troops across the river of the planned retreat. General Whiting reported that Captain Frobel

gathered on the river bank "all the tents and baggage of the 5th Alabama, cooking utensils, together with the ammunition, material, and equipments of the battery, even to the powder emptied from the loaded shells." He buried the shot and shell in secure concealment, then loaded all the remaining property in a large scow and risking discovery and destruction by the Union warships, floated it down the Potomac, and into the concealment of Chopawamsic Creek, whence it was eventually conveyed safely to Fredricksburg. (Hanson 1961:76)

Although Union accounts present a slightly different picture of Cockpit Point and what was left, Private Bellard did note that the troops sent to Shipping Point made "quite a haul," and mentioned the 40,000 cigars brought back by the Massachusetts soldiers .

On March 14 General Hooker reported that "all batteries extending from Cockpit Point to Aquia Creek are utterly demolished" (Wills 1975:153). The final assessment of the Confederate fortifications was made by two Union officers: General Hooker believed that the "defensive works of the rebels in and around the batteries were stupendous," and Lieutenant Commander Wyman wrote that the "batteries are of a much more formidable nature than I had

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supposed, and great labor has been expended in their construction."  
(Hanson 1961:77)

On March 15, 1862, the nearby town of Dumfries was occupied by Union troops and the Potomac Blockade was over. The Confederate batteries were periodically patrolled by Union troops for the remainder of the war. In October 1862, two partially buried shells exploded during a reconnaissance by men from Freeborn.

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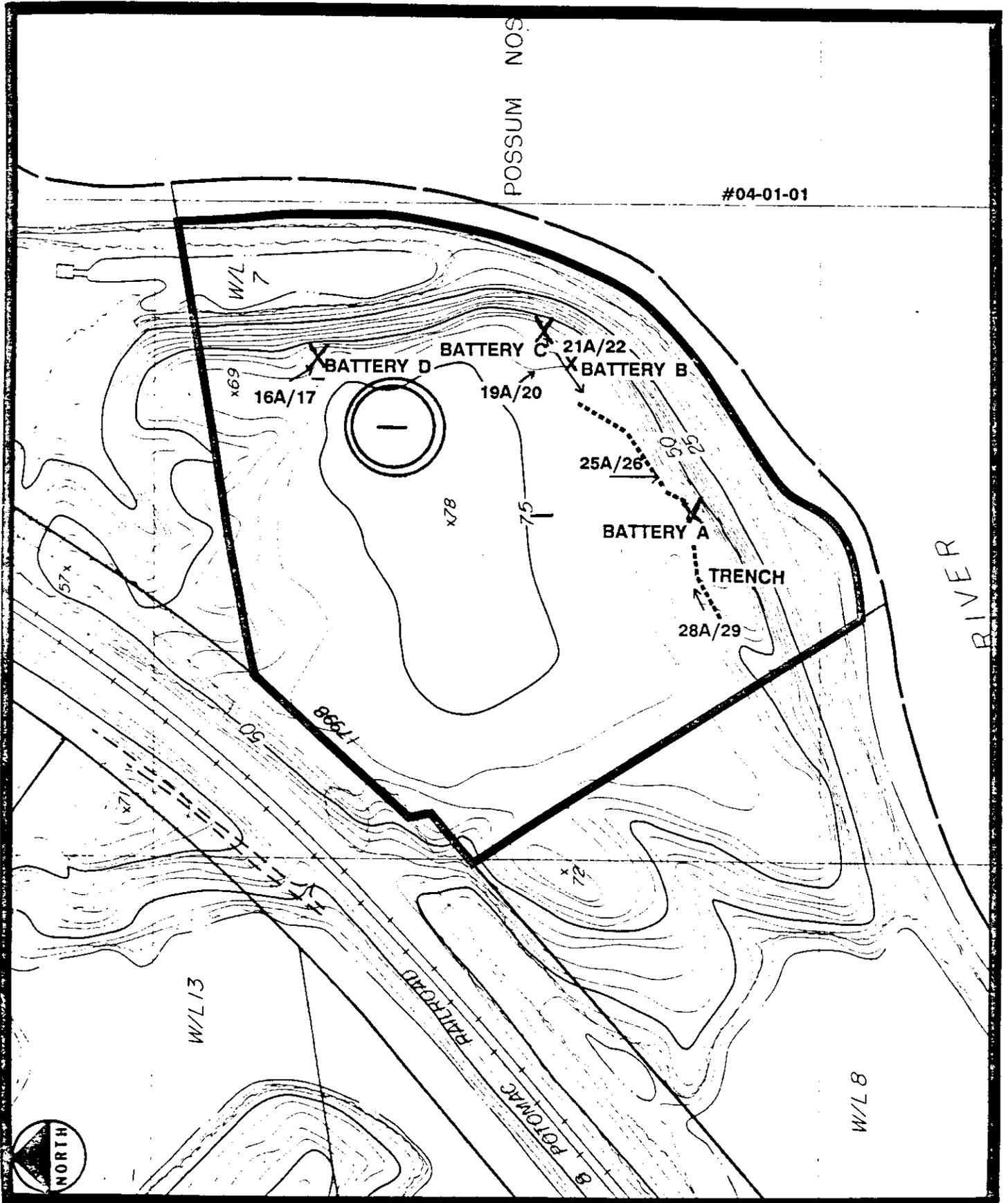
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Verbal Boundary Description:

The Cockpit Point Battery property includes most of the hill now called Possum Nose and labeled as such on the U.S.G.S. 7.5' topographic map (1983). The boundaries are the same as those that delineate Prince William County land parcel 04-01-0001. (See enclosed County map 1"=200') The northwest boundary point (A) begins where the 65-foot contour meets the eastern property boundary of the RF&P Railroad. The northwest point (A) is approximately 650 feet south of the center of the Stuarts Petroleum asphalt plant. From the northwest boundary point (A) the boundary line heads in an east, northeast direction for approximately 700 feet and terminates at the waterline (Point B). From this northeast boundary point (B), the property boundary follows the water line in a southerly and then southwesterly direction for approximately 1300 feet to the southeast boundary point (C). From the southeast boundary point (C), the property boundary extends in an almost due north direction for about 660 feet to the southwest boundary point (D), which is on the eastern property line of the RF&P Railroad. The distance of the boundary line (which corresponds to the eastern RF&P property line) between the southwest boundary point (D) and the northwest boundary point (A) is about 450 feet.

# COCKPIT POINT CONFEDERATE BATTERY

1" = 200'



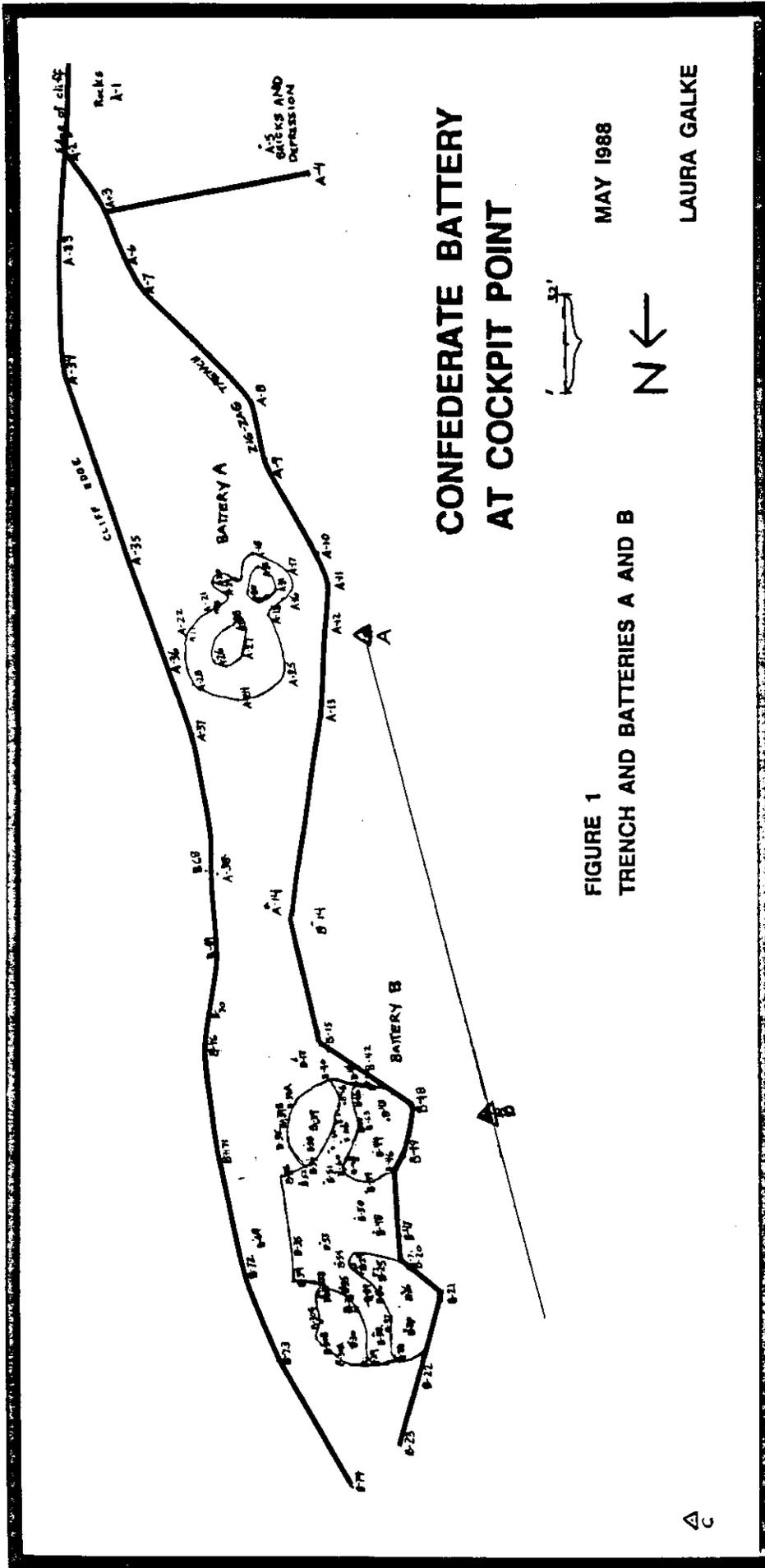
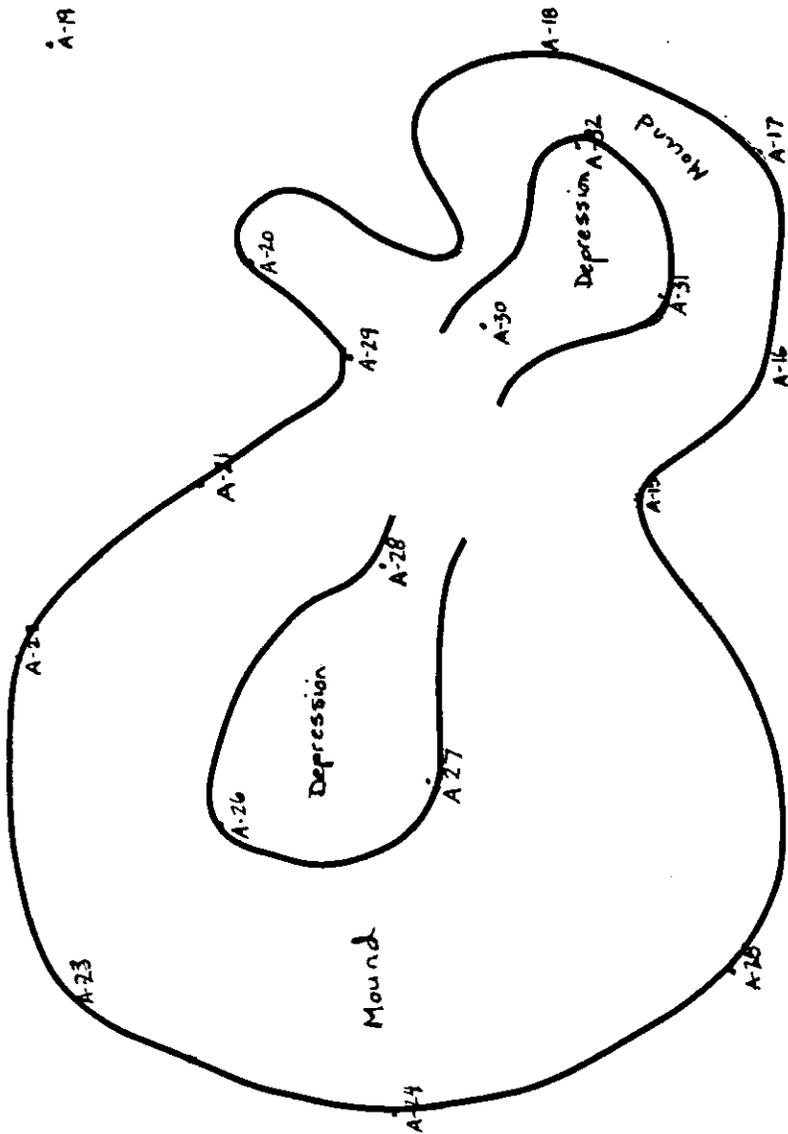


FIGURE 1  
TRENCH AND BATTERIES A AND B



**CONFEDERATE BATTERY  
AT COCKPIT POINT**



**FIGURE 2 BATTERY A**

MAY 1988

1 INCH = 8 FEET

LAURA GALKE





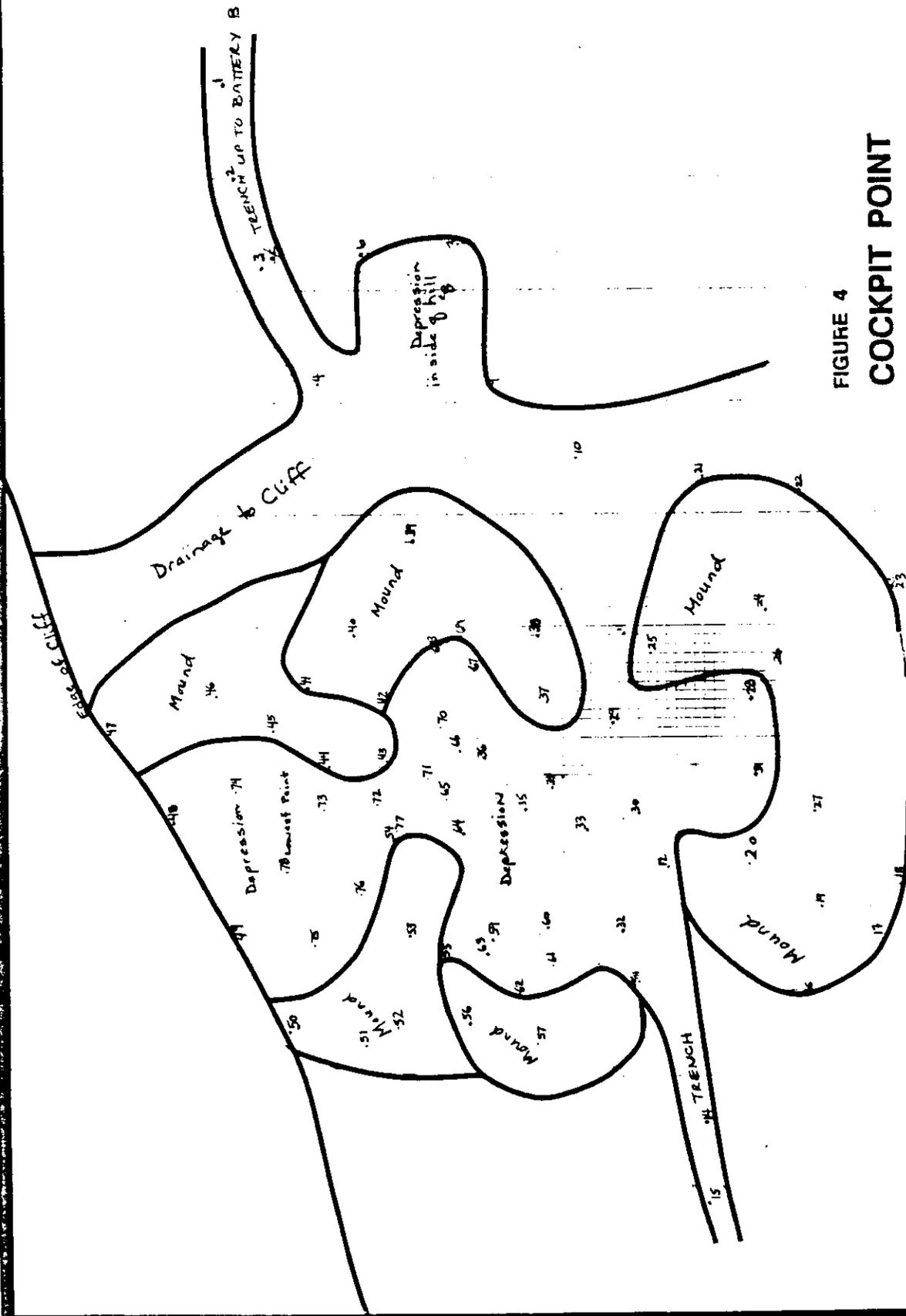
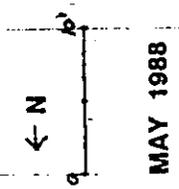


FIGURE 4  
**COCKPIT POINT**  
**CONFEDERATE BATTERY**  
 BATTERY C



MAY 1988



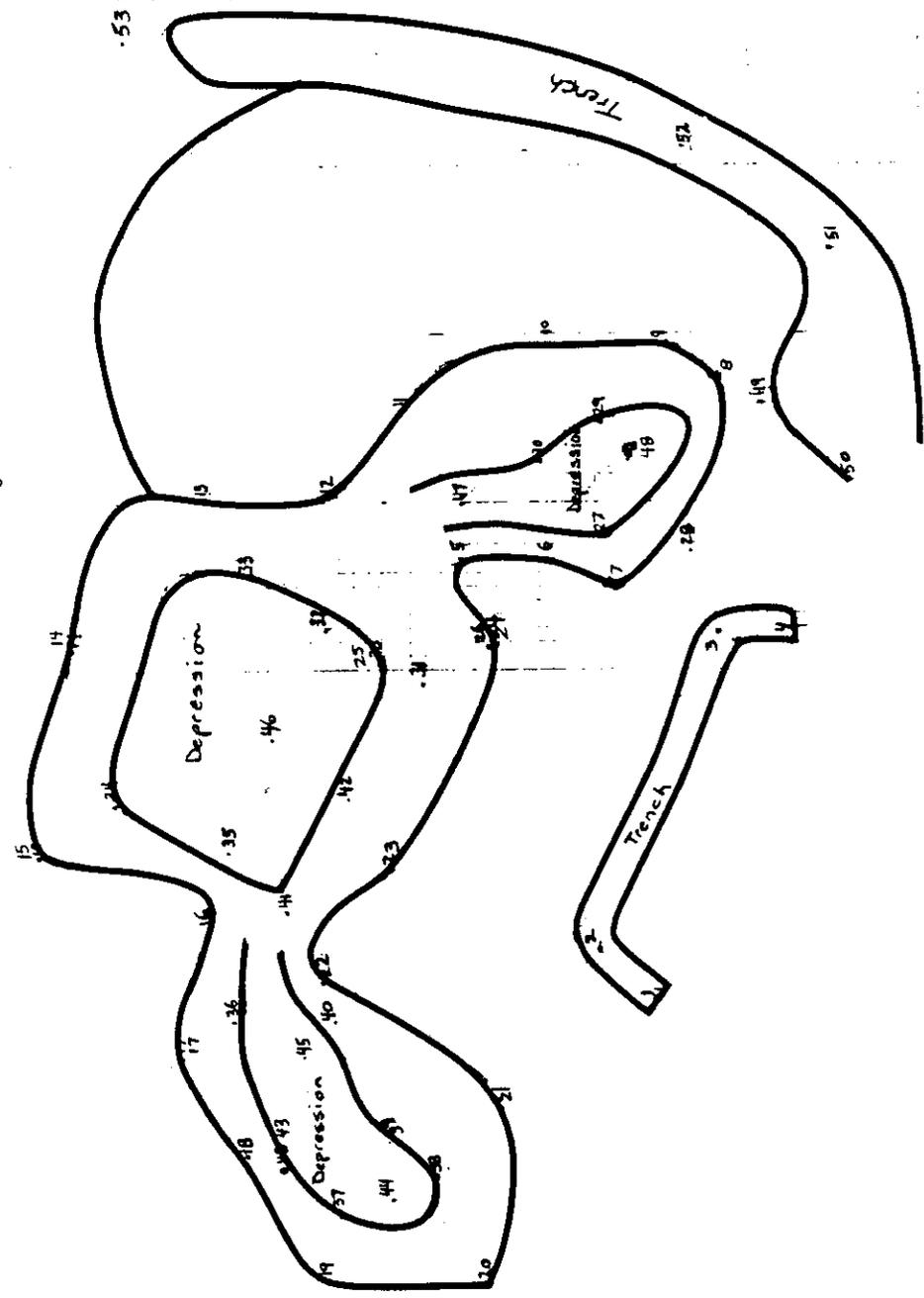


FIGURE 5

CONFEDERATE BATTERY  
COCKPIT POINT BATTERY D



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